My goal as a philosophy teacher is to help students improve as reasoners. In his *Lectures on Pedagogy*, Kant explains that reasoning is the "the capacity to recognize the connection between the general and the particular." Reasoning relies on two further powers: understanding, as "knowledge of the general," and judgment, "the application of the general to tbe particular."[1] My classroom activities are focused on cultivation of the understanding and self-conscious application of that understanding to the particular.

To work towards this goal, I guide my class through what I take to be three major steps toward students' development as independent reasoners.

1. Modeling my own reasoning process One of the first ways I encourage students to reflect on their patterns of thinking is by modeling that activity myself. It is often difficult for students to think about themselves as reasoners, first because this type of self-reflection is often not explicitly taught in earlier education, and second, because it is difficult to observe an activity which one is in the middle of. I therefore try to report my reasoning process to the class as I move through it, to give them the opportunity to observe the activity without also having to at the same time be a part of it. Analyzing others' arguments also gives the class an opportunity to track the thinking of truly great reasoners: Descartes' self-reporting of his thought process in the *Meditations*, for example, gives the students a step-by-step account of the process from general question (what can I know to be real?) to specific answer (only myself as a thinker).

2. Collective reasoning about course materials The next step of this process is to transition away from mere observation of reasoning to practicing it together. To this end, I try to guide the class through collective reasoning about the philosophical content of the course. As the course progresses, the students are increasingly able to take the lead in this activity, and I am correspondingly able to step back and operate as an equal co-reasoner. I find that reasoning as a group about material gives us an enriched understanding of it, superior to what any of us might have achieved on our own.

When I assign reading to my students, I expect them to come to class having done the reading, but not to have settled on any definite conclusions. It can be difficult for students to know how to engage in philosophical discussion, since philosophical arguments (especially historical ones) often seem very different from the type of communication they are used to. I begin by talking through my own initial experience of the reading, and ask each of the students to do the same: did they find the prose accessible? did the author's intuitions match up with their own? was anything said really surprising to them? This is a superficial way of engaging in the text, but it is a way to begin the process of assembling facts about it without encouraging premature judgment of it.

I then like to proceed through the material by moving from the most general aspects of the text to the most specific. What is the context in which the piece was written? what was the author's aim in writing it? What are *our* aims for this piece? The answers to these questions can serve as a guide to identifying the next level of structure in the writing. What general truths is the author relying on? what does the author expect us to already know before we start reading? What positive claims are being made? How

[1] [UP AK 9:472]

do they relate to each other and the aims we identified earlier? Descartes, for example, seems to take the existence of G-d or evil demons for granted in his argument, which can be off-putting to students. We can work through this by first analyzing the status these beliefs had in Descartes' historical context (i.e. that claims about the existence of G-d in seventeenth-century France may have held a similar status to ones about, say, atomic theory in twenty-first-century New York). Then, we can ask what role G-d and the evil demon are actually playing in the argument; whether rejection of their existence as presuppositions undermines the larger point being made.

Finally, we can turn to again to the piece as a whole and begin to put together the parts we have collected. Do the claims in the text come together as a traditional argument, or does the author expect something different to happen? If the aim of the author was to convince us of some point, do we *feel* convinced? When did we get on or off board with the author? It is often difficult for us to arrive at a definite answer to any of these questions and, between differing points of view and the limits of class time, it can be difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion at all. But this is, of course, a real feature of collective reasoning, and I think it important to allow and even encourage the students to remain undecided.

My classes are discussion-centered, and so I try to be conscientious of the varying degrees of comfort students have speaking in front of their peers. A great deal of our discussion is reporting on one's own impression and understanding of the text, which means that students can contribute without fear of giving a 'wrong' answer. Especially at the beginning of the semester, I often have students go around the room to give their responses, which gives everyone an opportunity to speak without the stress of cold-calling on anyone. Some students feel uncomfortable talking in large groups—for a smaller class, I like to encourage them to take this on as a challenge, because speaking in front of a group of fifteen to twenty people is a practical skill to learn in college. For larger classes, much of the discussion is broken up into smaller groups, whose participants can choose a member more confident in public speaking to report back to the class.

3. Practicing independent reasoning After we have practiced together in class, I expect students to rehearse this activity at home in writing exercises. Instead of going through the whole process on their own, I ask the students to take one step at a time in weekly short writing assignments. This way they can start with easier projects, like summary of the author's major claims, and build up to more difficult ones, like reconstructing specific arguments. I give the students questions to help direct their focus for their writing, but also let them know that if they are unable to answer the questions, or they try looking at things in a way that doesn't seem to pan out, they should just explain that to me in a note on their writing. This gives the students space to report honestly to me and themselves about their understanding of the material, while still encouraging the kind of reflective practice the assignments are meant to prompt.

I usually try to include an in-class debate near the end of the term, which gives the students an opportunity to reason spontaneously and creatively. One thing I like to do is have the students take an initial vote on where they stand on the question at hand, and then assign them to argue for the opposite side. This gives them the opportunity to look behind their prior beliefs and examine the rational structure behind them. Indeed, arguing well for the opposite side just as often assures students of their prior correctness as it does change their minds.

Although it can seem excessively abstract to speak about teaching in terms of developing reasoners and training the understanding, I find that it can have a wonderfully concretizing effect in philosophy classes. I often teach on on Kant's practical philosophy, and find that, by allowing that very philosophy to direct classroom activity, I can show the students how his apparently theoretical claims can indeed be made practical.